

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A vehicle article carrier for supporting articles above an outer body surface of a vehicle, comprising:

a pair of support rails secured to said outer body surface generally parallel to one another, and orientated parallel to a longitudinal axis extending along said outer body surface;

a pair of cross bars supported from said support rails for supporting articles thereon, at least one of said cross bars being moveable from a stowed position wherein it is disposed parallel to one of said support rails, to an operative position wherein it extends generally perpendicular to said support rails and spans between said support rails;

each said cross bar comprising:

a pivot mechanism disposed at a first end for pivotally coupling said first end thereof to a first one of said support rails; and

a securing mechanism disposed at a second end for latching said second end to a second one of said support rails, said securing mechanism including:

a latching member pivotally supported from said first end; and

an actuating member operably associated with said latching member for enabling an individual to urge said latching member between a latched position relative to said first one of said support rails, and an unlatched position relative to said one of said support rails.

2. The vehicle article carrier of claim 1, wherein said securing mechanism further comprises:

a housing; and

a protective member coupled to a lower portion of said housing to protect against scratching or marring said outer body vehicle surface when said cross bar is being moved between said stowed and operative positions.

3. The vehicle article carrier of claim 1, wherein said actuating member is pivotally coupled to said latching member.

4. The vehicle article carrier of claim 1, further comprising a biasing member for urging said actuating member into a closed position wherein said biasing member is positioned generally flush against an outer surface of said second end of said cross bar.

5. The vehicle article carrier of claim 1, wherein said second end of each said cross bar includes an end support portion for housing said actuating member and said latching member.

6. The vehicle article carrier of claim 1, further comprising a biasing member operably associated with said latching member for biasing said latching member into said latched position.

7. A vehicle article carrier for supporting articles elevationally above an outer body surface of a vehicle, comprising:

a pair of support rails adapted to be fixedly secured to said outer body surface, a first one of said support rails including a first mounting portion and a second one of said support rails including a second mounting portion;

a pair of cross bars securable to said support rails to span a distance separating said support rails, for supporting articles thereon;

at least one of said cross bars including:

a first outermost end having a pivot mechanism for pivotally securing said first end to said first mounting portion of said first one of said support rails, said pivot mechanism enabling said one cross bar to be pivoted about both a vertical axis and a horizontal axis such that said one cross bar can be moved from a stowed position, wherein said one cross bar is orientated generally parallel to said first one of said support rails, to an operative position spanning between said support rails;

a second outermost end having :

a housing;

a latching member pivotally secured to said housing; and

an actuating member pivotally secured to latching member for moving said latching member between latched and unlatched positions relative to said second mounting portion.

8. The vehicle article carrier of claim 7, further comprising a biasing member disposed within said housing for urging said latching member into said latched position.

9. The vehicle article carrier of claim 7, further comprising a biasing member for urging said actuating member into a closed position generally flush with an outer surface of said housing.

10. The vehicle article carrier of claim 7, wherein said housing further comprises a resilient member secured at a lower area thereof for preventing scratching of said outer body surface by said housing as said one cross bar is moved between said stowed and operative positions.

11. The vehicle article carrier of claim 10, wherein said resilient member comprises a rubber grommet.

12. The vehicle article carrier of claim 7, wherein said actuating member opens to a position extending at substantially a 90 degree angle relative to an upper outer surface of said housing when said actuating member is moved into an open position to unlatch said latching member.

12. The vehicle article carrier of claim 7, wherein said second mounting portion includes a cavity having a lip portion, said cavity receiving a portion of said housing when said one cross bar is disposed in said stowed position.

13. The vehicle article carrier of claim 7, wherein:

    said first mounting portion of said one support rail includes a semi-circular, dish shaped surface;

    said pivot mechanism includes a radiused surface shaped complementary to said dish shaped surface; and

    a threaded securing pin for securing said dish shaped surface to said radiused surface.

14. The vehicle article carrier of claim 13, wherein said dish shaped surface includes a non-linear slot through which said threaded securing pin extends.

15. A vehicle article carrier for supporting articles elevationally above an outer body surface of a vehicle, said vehicle article carrier including:

a pair of support rails adapted to be secured to said outer body surface generally parallel to one another, and orientated parallel to a longitudinal axis extending along said outer body surface, a first one of said support rails including a first mounting portion and a second mounting portion, and a second one of said support rails including a third mounting portion ;

said first mounting portion including an arcuate support wall;

a pair of cross bars supported from said support rails for supporting articles thereon, at least one of said cross bars being moveable from a stowed position wherein it is disposed parallel to one of said support rails, to an operative position wherein it extends generally perpendicular to said support rails and spans between said support rails;

each said cross bar comprising:

a pivot mechanism disposed at a first end for pivotally coupling said first end thereof to a first one of said support rails; and

a securing mechanism disposed at a second end for latching said second end to said third mounting portion of said second one of said support rails;

said pivot mechanism including an arcuate wall portion shaped generally complementary to said arcuate support surface, and a securing element for securing said arcuate wall portion to said arcuate support

surface to enable rotation of said one cross bar about a vertical axis and also a horizontal axis when said one cross bar is moved between said stowed and operative positions.

16. The vehicle article carrier of claim 15, wherein said arcuate wall portion includes a slot having a non-constant cross sectional area.

17. The vehicle article carrier of claim 15, wherein said securing mechanism comprises:

a housing;

a latching member pivotally supported relative to said housing;

an actuating member operably coupled to said latching member and coupled pivotally relative to said housing, for urging said latching member between latched and unlatched positions relative to one of said second and third securing portions.

18. The vehicle article carrier of claim 17, further comprising a biasing member for biasing said latching member in said latched position.

19. The vehicle article carrier of claim 17, further comprising a biasing member for biasing said actuating member into a closed position relative to said housing when said latching member is in said latched position.